

“Domine, volumus Jesum videre,” John 12:21.

“Credo, Domine; adjuva incredulitatem meam,” Mark 9:24.

GENESIS 3

¹Now the serpent was more clever than any wild animal which the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Has God really said, ‘You shall not eat from any tree in the garden’?”

²The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat fruit from the trees of the garden, ³but not from the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden. God has said, ‘You shall not eat from it. You shall not touch it, or else you will die.’”

⁴The serpent said to the woman, “You certainly will not die. ⁵In fact, God knows that the day you eat from it, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

⁶When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was appealing to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took some of its fruit and ate. She gave some also to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. ⁷The eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized that they were naked. They sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for their waists. ⁸They heard the voice of the LORD God, who was walking around in the garden during the cooler part of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.

⁹The LORD God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?”

¹⁰The man said, “I heard your voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, so I hid myself.”

¹¹God said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree from which I commanded you not to eat?”

¹²The man said, “The woman you gave to be with me—she gave me fruit from the tree, and I ate it.”

¹³The LORD God said to the woman, “What have you done?”

The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

¹⁴The LORD God said to the serpent: Because you have done this, you are cursed more than all the livestock, and more than every wild animal. You shall crawl on your belly, and you shall eat dust all the days of your life.

¹⁵I will put hostility between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed. He will crush your head, and you will crush his heel.



Any card players out there? How is your poker face? Many believe that card games are not won with the hand, but with the face.

- Are you able to keep a straight face?
- Can you fake it? bluff? pretend?
- Are you too honest?
- Do you give it away before your friends and family even have to try?

How about in the game of temptation and good deeds? If you are serious about fighting sin, death, and the devil, there is a very good “tell.” In the first card game ever, there were no cards. The first trick was taken from Adam and Eve, and it was done by the devil. But it is to us an open hand, because ...

THE LORD GOD SHOWS HIS GRACE

The Bible just began. God finished creating the world. It is very good with no rumor of sin or death. It was a tale of two trees, and it was the best of times. There was a clear way to worship God, to eat at the tree of life. There was a clear way to anger God, to eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

1. The devil shows us his hand.

From the beginning, the devil speaks his native language, that of lies (John 8:44). Eve should have been tipped off; snakes don't have voice-boxes. Nor do they lie.

His approach to tempt is timeless. Notice the four steps:

- 1) Question. “Really did God say?” The devil’s first word in the Bible is “*aph*,” “Reaaally?” It is emphatic. It caused Eve to question God in a way she otherwise would not.
- 2) Exaggerate. “*You shall not eat from any tree in the garden*”? Tricky, isn't it? Now, I wonder why the devil exaggerated that part, don't you? Could it be that, when we question God's commands, we sometimes exaggerate God's commands for effect? “Look, just because we fool around apart from marriage doesn't mean we're going to die.” “Listen, just because I bend the commandments every once in a while doesn't mean I'm going to hell.” We empty the full force of God's Law, and so we miss out on God's will for our lives.
- 3) Contradict. Eve does a pretty good job of deflecting that first temptation, but now the devil has her thinking. So instead of contradicting God right away, he checked her temperature a little bit. He contradicts God this way, “*You certainly will not die*” (v 4) Straight-up contradicting God is the third thing the devil does, but the devil waits until he can add the fourth ingredient:

- 4) Offer motive to sin. Eve is so conscious of following God that the devil adds motive in a way she never thought. *“God knows that the day you eat from it, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil”* (v 4-5). She knew good, but she didn’t yet know evil. The idea is that knowing evil is advantageous. But it is a bite that over time will sour and spoil and finally kill.

He always wants to cross the line into sin. Notice how the temptation affects Eve’s intellect, emotions, and will. When she *“saw that the fruit was good for eating, that it was appealing to the eyes, and ... desirable to make one wise, she took some of the fruit and ate”* (v 6). Here the woman’s intellect, upon scientific examination, has comprehended and understood that the fruit is going to be tasty, healthful. She has impulses now, although any other tree in the garden would have been just fine, she follows the emotions of her heart in the moment. Finally the intelligence and emotional attachment have formulated a strength of will, and the first sin in the heart takes form.

There it is. That’s the devil’s hand. We can see his playbook in all this. Do you recognize how the devil does these same things to you? Q-E-C-M

Eve’s actions merely followed, and she has committed the first sin ever. She shares it with Adam, who apparently has been standing there like a bump on a log. This is sin, and ...

2. The man and woman are playing open-handed. ... Like the first time learning cards. Now you cannot blame them for this. Okay, you can blame them for this. Adam and Eve are new to the game, but they had little more than one job, and they blew it. They ate from the tree. How quickly they show the first results of sin.

Into the garden walks the Lord God in the cool of the day, and you can stop the Lord God at the use of one word, *“Where?”* That word, *“Where?”* labels their dilemma. They have sinned, and sin separates. The worst separation is separation from God. But that is exactly what the sin of Adam and Eve had done.

But we can also blame ourselves for this. We have shown we are equally powerless without any divine help. As Adam and Eve are approached with their sin, they play the blame game and miss their chance to confess. All sinners are in the same position; our hearts are laid bare before the Lord God. He would be right and just to treat us *“as our sins deserve.”* Yet His Law brings us to this blessed act of confessing our sins. He has given His Church the Keys to heaven. *“Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.” “If we claimed we haven’t sinned, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness”* (1 John 1:8-9). Lent is great, isn’t it? It affords us a season of

focusing our hearts and divulging before the courtroom of God all we know. And He forgives us just as He forgave Adam and Eve. Why is that?

3. The Lord God has the kicker.

Now, the kicker in cards, at least in poker, is when one card makes the difference. You and I may tie with two pair in our hand, and then we have to look to the next-highest card. When the devil seems to have victory, the Lord God has the kicker. Here is how that came about:

He took serious steps of compassion. The Lord God mercifully came to them without the consuming fire, without the blinding majesty, without the wrath. He came with questions. Even when the questions are met with blame and more lies, He is undeterred. For the first time the Lord God offers chances to repent, but certainly not for the last time. This is our loving God. He reveals the Enemy's tricks and shows the devil's hand for what it is.

Take note that God questioned Adam; He questioned Eve. But His questioning stopped there. The devil, or trickster, had already fallen from heaven some time between creation and this fall of man. So God shows less compassion for this ultimate enemy. God instead judged the ultimate evil, leveling a curse for all time.

In that curse upon the snake for all time, God also bundled an eternal rescue. This rescue mission is framed nicely in the words: "*I will put hostility between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed. He will crush your head, and you will crush his heel*" (v 15). This is known as the **protevangel**; that is, the first gospel. God speaks it to the one who must be judged, but God includes rescue for the ones who fell into sin. The woman's Seed, her Offspring, would one day come along and fulfill the curse against the ancient serpent, the red dragon of Revelation, the angel in disguise, the devil, that old evil Foe. As surely as Adam and Eve were real people, and the first sin was actually eating of the tree; so this true Son of Man would rise victorious in time.

He would defend against every demonic temptation; He would match the Law and defeat all sin; He would do all things well; He would bury eternal death; and He would demolish the deeds of the devil Himself. He would be pierced and lose His footing for a time when raised on a cross, but the devil and His work would be undone. The Fall into sin may seem as devastating as Jesus' death, but the first gospel promise of God is as crushing as the devil's defeat.

Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope, through the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.